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Chairman: Mr. Peralta (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Paraguay)

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In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Mr. Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/68/38,[1] A/63/222 and A/63/215)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/63/214, A/63/216, A/63/364[1] and A/63/205)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/217)

1. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that robust international action would be needed to promote the equality of women. Israel had recently established an Equal Opportunities Commission within the Ministry of Labour. The Commission compiled statistics on equality in the workplace, conducted campaigns and acted as ombudsman with the competence to initiate legal action. Two other Government agencies helped formulate laws and policies and ensured that a gender advisor was appointed for every mayor. Despite such efforts, women's salaries were only 83 per cent those of men, and only 17 out of 120 Members of Parliament were women. Women in the Cabinet were few, if prominent. Israel was committed to remedying the situation, and could in addition count on vibrant non-governmental organizations.

2. In July 2008, Israel had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Protocol). Israel welcomed the focus of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on prevention, protection and prosecution, and had a policy of prioritizing protection and support for victims rather than prosecution.

3. Israel had welcomed Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), which condemned sexual violence in the context of armed conflict; the perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. It strongly supported the Security Council presidential statement on mediation (S/PRST/2008/36) and had amended national law to ensure that women were included in any group involved in peacebuilding negotiations or conflict resolution. In view of the forthcoming discussions, her delegation wished to stress that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights referred to the equal rights of men and women, without qualification or grey areas. No such limitations should be introduced for any reason.

4. **Ms. Al Saleh** (Bahrain) said that her country's Constitution, which was based on Islamic law, stressed respect for and empowerment of women. A Supreme Commission for Women had been established as the focal point for policymaking on women's issues. The reform process had given women full political rights; in the municipal and parliamentary elections of 2002 and 2006, women had been entitled to vote and to run for office. Bahrain had been chosen to host a regional office for the economic empowerment of Arab women. Bahraini women continued to be active on the international stage, both as individuals and in the Bahraini Women's Association.

5. Two shelters for the victims of family violence and eight new Family Counselling Offices had been opened, the latter after the holding of a workshop supported by the United Nations Development Programme. Civil society organizations had organized events and campaigns to combat gender discrimination, press for a family code, open a children's centre and set up a hotline. The International Federation for Human Rights had visited the country to carry out a survey on how to involve women in decision-making.

6. A seminar supported by the United States Middle East Partnership had discussed plans for a family code, drawing on the concept of national dialogue and the experience of Morocco in combining women's rights with the existing legislative framework. The Prime Minister had stressed that any family code needed to be acceptable to all parties. Progress had also been made on the issue of granting citizenship to the sons of Bahraini women: the Migration and Passports Agency and the Secretariat-General of the Supreme Council for Women had compiled a list of eligible applications, which had been referred to the Royal Court. A series of measures had been taken to ensure social security for women.

7. **Ms. Soe** (Myanmar) said that Myanmar traditional law guaranteed freedom and equal rights for women, including the right to own and inherit property.

[1] To be issued.

The Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs was working for the advancement of women in 12 areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation had been established as a non-governmental organization to carry out activities promoting women's development based on guidelines set by the National Committee. Other organizations such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association and the Myanmar Women's Sport Federation were also active in promoting the development of women.

8. Myanmar had a zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women and girls and emphasized social development in the effort to eliminate such violence. The Government and several women's organizations promoted policies to ensure that the socio-economic needs and priorities of women and girls were addressed systematically. The Government was also working to promote the welfare of women in rural areas. To that end, it had established 24 special development regions and was focusing on improving their economic life, as well as transportation, health and educational services and providing a safe water supply.

9. A comprehensive framework that included strengthening of legislation, a national plan of action and increased cooperation at the national and international levels had been put in place to tackle the problem of trafficking in persons. Myanmar had acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as well as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. Her country had enacted an anti-human trafficking law in September 2005; between September 2005 and the first quarter of 2008, 239 trafficking cases had been prosecuted, and action had been taken against 6,378 offenders.

10. **Ms. Chibesakunda** (Zambia) said that, since the adoption of its national gender policy in 2002, her Government had instituted measures to facilitate implementation of that policy and had mainstreamed gender into the fifth National Development Plan. The Plan included a specific chapter on gender and development, which identified five areas of focused intervention, namely, increasing the retention rate of girls in the education system, reducing gender-based violence, reversing the transmission of HIV, increased access to titled land and capacity-building in gender analysis.

11. Realizing that gender-based violence continued to increase the risks of HIV transmission, especially among women and children, the Government had amended the Penal Code to introduce specific provisions on sexual offences. It had also taken steps to develop comprehensive legislation to address gender-based violence.

12. In response to the increased participation of girls in education, the Government had introduced administrative measures such as the abolition of school fees, implementation of affirmative action measures and the establishment of weekly boarding schools, especially in rural areas. Cooperating and development partners continued to play a pivotal role in supporting girls' education by providing bursaries.

13. A sensitization programme for traditional leaders had been set up to change cultural practices that adversely affected women and had helped reduce negative attitudes towards them. In spite of the progress achieved, Zambia continued to face challenges, including a high maternal mortality rate, high poverty levels and an HIV/AIDS pandemic. Like other developing countries, it required financial aid for gender programmes and technical assistance to achieve the agreed international goals relating to women.

14. **Ms. Taracena** (Guatemala) said that, thanks to Guatemala's system of urban and rural development councils, women's participation in public life was increasing, as was the number of women's organizations. Laws had been amended and institutions had been revamped in order to make it possible to reduce domestic violence, punish human trafficking, combat discrimination based on gender and ethnic origin, reform education and implement reproductive health programmes.

15. Under a recently enacted law against femicide and other forms of violence against women, femicide was punishable by 25 to 50 years imprisonment without parole. The State had undertaken to set up integrated support centres for women survivors of violence, strengthen the National Coordinating Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women and implement the National Plan on the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women.

16. Guatemala would be presenting its seventh periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its next session, demonstrating the high priority that it attached to women's issues. Her Government supported the campaign of the Secretary-General to end violence against women, but would like to have more detailed information on the scope and achievements of the campaign.

17. Her country attached great importance to the issue of gender equality within the entire United Nations system. Noting that the General Assembly had acknowledged the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women, she said that her Government was committed to promoting gender mainstreaming in sustainable development programmes. More resources must be made available to the relevant programmes and activities. Her delegation congratulated the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its work in promoting gender equity and women's empowerment and for its support for national institutions.

18. Guatemala had welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, and the subsequent adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), calling for additional measures to prevent acts of sexual violence and abuse against women and girls. Her Government supported the launching of the UNIFEM campaign Say NO to Violence against Women and hoped that a gender analysis would be made of the signatures collected, in order to determine what percentage of men were prepared to end violence against women. The yearly celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women should make a difference in the fight against such violence.

19. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama) said that Panama's human development programmes attached high priority to the promotion of women's health and the eradication of violence against women and girls. In order to raise awareness of the serious public health problem created by domestic violence, the Ministry of Social Development had launched a campaign with the slogan "If you hit one of us, you hit all of us." The campaign was being carried out in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and one of its objectives was to increase the reporting of cases of violence against women.

20. Panama's Penal Code had been amended to establish penalties of up to 30 years imprisonment for perpetrators of crimes involving domestic violence. The database being coordinated by the United Nations Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/143 would be useful in developing policies and measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

21. The Ministry of Health was implementing strategies to improve the overall health of women. The comprehensive women's health programme included guidelines for epidemiological surveillance of maternal mortality and measures for improving prenatal care. The objectives of the programme were to offer comprehensive health care to women at all stages of life, especially among vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and newborns; extend the coverage and improve the quality of care before, during and after conception, as well as after menopause; strengthen the operational capacity of women's health services; promote training and scientific and technical upgrading for human resources; encourage medical and psychosocial research in the area of women's health; promote an integrated approach to sexual and reproductive health; and supervise, monitor and evaluate the programme at all levels.

22. **Ms. Tadesse** (Ethiopia) stressed that every step towards the empowerment of women led to progress for society as a whole. She agreed with the conclusion in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/217) that the achievement of the outcomes of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly required systematic integration of gender perspectives in social, political and economic development policies. She also agreed with the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/214) concerning the importance of a comprehensive approach to preventing and eliminating violence against women, which, whether the result of customary attitudes, economic disparity or criminal activity, continued to be rampant.

23. Her Government was committed to improving the situation of women. The Constitution recognized women's right to participate in the political and economic life of the nation, including at the decision-making level. Measures had been adopted to curb all

forms of discrimination against women and increase the participation of women in the development process. Awareness-creation, advocacy and lobbying activities had been undertaken to promote equal opportunities for women in assuming decision-making roles, leading to a significant increase in the number of women in positions of responsibility. There were for example 117 women in the House of People's Representatives and a number of ministerial and public positions were or had been held by women.

24. The current health policy devoted special attention to the family, in particular the needs of women and children. In the education sector, efforts had been made to increase the enrolment and retention rates of girls and women. In order to ensure equal rights for women before the law, the Penal Code had been thoroughly revised to criminalize such forms of violence against women as rape and abduction and make them punishable by 10-25 years imprisonment. The Family Law gave women equal rights in such areas as inheritance, divorce and child custody. Additional legislation had been adopted to allow women access to land, credit and other productive resources.

25. Her delegation remained committed to the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming in all development sectors. Gender equality was an important human right and must be promoted through coordination and strategic partnerships in the context of United Nations efforts to protect human rights. Development partners should increase their financial and technical assistance in order to translate the international community's shared aims into actions.

26. **Mr. Valvatne** (Norway) said that no nation could afford to ignore the talent of women, who made up half the workforce and who, when included in decision-making, improved performance and governance. In Norway, for example, his Government had found it unacceptable that, even though almost 65 per cent of university graduates were women, corporate boardrooms remained a male preserve. Faced with slow progress in changing that state of affairs, in 2003 his Government had adopted a bill requiring that at least 40 per cent of the directors of public companies listed on the Norwegian Stock Exchange be women. The current figure was 39 per cent, as opposed to 7 per cent when the bill had been adopted. State-owned companies were subject to the same requirement.

27. With a view to striking a better balance between work and family life without compromising gender equality, his Government had decided to give fathers incentives to spend more time at home and encourage mothers not to abandon their careers to care for their children. A bill was before the Parliament to extend fathers' parental leave from six weeks to ten weeks; weeks not used by the father could be transferred to the mother. He regretted that, despite much talk of gender mainstreaming in the course of the current debate, little progress had been made. For example, 13 men and 6 women had been proposed as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Every effort must be made to ensure a 50/50 gender balance on that Committee during the election of members on 3 November 2008.

28. **Ms. Melon** (Argentina) underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach to gender issues and the empowerment of women which took into account the important role women should play in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres.

29. In April 2008, her Government had adopted the Human Trafficking Act implementing the National Programme to Prevent and Eliminate Human Trafficking and Assist Victims. She stressed that it was essential to attack the root causes of trafficking, supply and demand and pledged her delegation's full support to the international community's efforts to eliminate that scourge.

30. Her delegation welcomed efforts to deal with the problem of violence against women, in particular in situations of armed conflict, at the international level; at the United Nations, for example through Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); or at the Organization of American States (OAS). In Argentina, the National Council on Women had implemented its National Training, Technical Assistance and Awareness-Raising Campaign on Violence against Women. The Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence had provided counselling for child, adolescent and adult victims of both sexes since 1995. In addition, the Victims against Violence campaign had been launched in 2006. The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) had also agreed to prepare a campaign to combat violence against women during the period 2008-2015.

31. Actions had been undertaken in the context of her Government's comprehensive approach to protecting women's health throughout their lives to reduce

maternal mortality. The 2002 National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation recognized the right to health and the right of every person to make an informed decision on the use of an appropriate reversible, non-abortive and temporary birth control method in order to facilitate decisions on whether or not to have children and on the spacing and timing of pregnancies. In that same spirit, the National Programme for Comprehensive Sexual Education had been launched in 2006.

32. Her delegation welcomed efforts to increase system-wide coherence, in particular with regard to new gender architecture. That new structure must however meet needs on the ground and include an effective inter-State governance mechanism. It should not simply eliminate existing mechanisms but should absorb their capabilities and knowledge, while offering increased coordination and coherence, clear leadership and accountability, operational capacity on the ground and adequate funding.

33. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, despite progress made, millions of women were still deprived of their human rights, which limited their opportunities, thereby hindering the development of their societies. The international community must ensure promotion of women's rights through implementation of the outcomes of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. She deplored the tragic human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which was directly attributable to the longest military occupation in modern history. The toll of systematic human rights violations by Israel, the occupying Power, on Palestinian women and their families could not be over-emphasized. Palestinian society had been shredded and families devastated. While Palestinian women, like women everywhere, continued to fight inequality and discrimination in their society, the occupation and its effects further aggravated the obstacles to women's social, economic and political advancement.

34. Palestinian women strived to live in a free, democratic and secure environment for themselves and their families in the face of some of the cruellest practices of the occupying Power: loved ones killed; homes bulldozed; lands destroyed; orchards uprooted; ever-expanding settlements; and the unlawful separation wall. Restrictions on Palestinians' movements within the occupied Palestinian territory, with more than 600 checkpoints, were a special hardship for Palestinian women. Since 2000, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 69 women had given birth at Israeli checkpoints, leading to 35 miscarriages and many deaths of pregnant women.

35. The international community must prevail on Israel to facilitate access by pregnant women to medical care, as required by international humanitarian law and hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and crimes against Palestinian women. In that context she noted that inadequate medical care during pregnancy was the third cause of mortality among Palestinian women of reproductive age; 18,000 of the 117,000 pregnant women in the occupied Palestinian territory would suffer poor pregnancy outcomes due to the lack of adequate health care.

36. Illegal Israeli policies had devastated the Palestinian economy, placing an exceptional burden on Palestinian women. As a result of the Israeli occupation and physical, institutional and administrative restrictions, the Palestinian economy was in a precipitous decline. Poverty and unemployment were rampant, especially in the Gaza Strip, where 1.1 million of 1.5 million people were dependent on food aid. Access to medical care, food, clean water and fuel continued to be obstructed. Urgent assistance must be provided to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, in particular women and their children. The international community must demand that Israel meet its obligations in that regard.

37. Despite the relaunching of the peace process in Annapolis in 2007, Israeli human rights violations continued and some had intensified. Palestinian women looked to the international community and international law to protect their rights and act as guarantors of the peace and security that they aspired to. Israel must however cease its illegal practices, end its occupation and allow for an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Only then could real progress be made towards the advancement of all women in the region.

38. **Ms. Al-Zibdeh** (Jordan) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had in 2007 been added to Jordan's Official Gazette. Gender equality was a national

priority, and much progress had been made, despite patriarchical social preconceptions. There were now 4 women ministers out of a total of 28, and women were represented in both houses of Parliament, key judicial and diplomatic roles, and municipal councils. Women's representation in the workforce had increased from 13.8 per cent in 2006 to 14.7 per cent in 2007. A quota of 20 per cent of positions on municipal councils had been reserved for women. A national strategy had been enacted in order to channel the widespread enthusiasm for the advancement of women among civil society.

39. Legislation was being amended in order to extend social security to all workers without distinction, establish a maternity fund and ensure equal retirement provisions. A bank founded in 2006 granted loans for small projects and particularly for women. Female unemployment remained a challenge but was being addressed in a number of ways, including small-scale projects in rural areas.

40. In January 2008, Parliament had passed a law to provide effective legal and social protection from family violence. A document had been issued in order to provide definitions and guidelines on the subject. The Government had opened a shelter for women and child victims, and had overhauled the women's temporary detention centre with a new focus on rehabilitation and training, in accordance with international standards. Emphasis was also being placed on the role of mosque preachers in urging an end to violence against women. The Jordanian National Commission on Women's Affairs continued to be active in a number of relevant areas, including, inter alia, fostering a gender perspective in the public sector and in the general budget. Jordan remained committed to international cooperation in that domain.

41. **Ms. 'Utoikamanu** (Tonga) said that the advancement of women through education stimulated economic growth and reduced poverty, malnutrition and child mortality. Women should be given equal opportunities and access to education and training, as they currently accounted for two thirds of the world's population living in extreme poverty. Almost two thirds of working women in the developing world worked in the informal sector or as unpaid caretakers. The numbers of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS had increased over the past decade and a proactive approach to prevention and public education was needed.

42. In the debate on system-wide coherence in development, her country had given special attention to Millennium Development Goal 3, promote gender equality and empower women. The gender perspective should be integrated and mainstreamed within United Nations agencies, especially those concerned with sustainable development. She commended the promotion by UNIFEM of programme-based aid delivery modalities that supported country ownership of development policy and coordination action, while harmonizing national and donor funding and emphasizing results and mutual accountability of the donors and developing countries. The modalities also ensured more predictable aid flows, reduced transaction costs and included issues such as sustainable development in the programme assessment.

43. Progress towards Goal 3 was related to implementation of Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development. The World Bank had estimated the cost of reaching Goal 3 at $13 billion per year. Currently, MDG programmes relating to the advancement of women were mostly implemented through sectoral initiatives, leaving only a small budgetary allocation for activities directly related to gender empowerment. The MDG Gap Task Force report stated that aid flows would need to be increased to support core development programmes. The current global financial crisis was an added challenge, and donor countries should be urged to refrain from short-term actions that would undermine the achievement of long-term benefits.

44. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her Government had ratified national and regional instruments to promote and protect the rights of women and had presented its most recent report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the current year. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were central to the country's development agenda, and the Government was mainstreaming gender in its policies, programmes and activities through the national gender machinery and gender focal points in Ministries and local government. The remaining challenges included inadequate gender-disaggregated data, financial constraints and a need for skills training. The United Nations should have a strong gender entity with the necessary capacity and resources.

45. In May 2008, the Tanzanian President had launched a national campaign Say No to Violence

against Women in support of the Secretary-General's call for global action. The campaign was intended to raise awareness in support of implementation of the national plan of action to end such violence by 2015. The Government had adopted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2008 which criminalized acts of trafficking or facilitating trafficking and also provided compensation for victims. The issue of trafficking was complex and required joint action at the national, regional and international levels.

46. Surviving childbirth should be part of women's basic right to health and life, and all women should therefore have access to health centres and experienced midwives. In September, her country had been one of the hosts of a special event entitled Commitment to Progress for Mothers, Newborns and Children to coincide with the United Nations high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

47. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that the current meeting was being held on the first International Day of Rural Women. Women accounted for over half the population of the planet and were rightly considered the cornerstone of society in view of their role and contribution to the progress of humanity. Yet they continued to suffer discrimination that was only aggravated by the current food, energy, financial and climate change crises. Cameroon gave high priority to the advancement of women and had prepared a national development strategy to address gender inequalities. Her Government was constantly monitoring the progress made towards implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and making adjustments to its strategies as appropriate. Its policy declaration and multisectoral action plan served as a road map for Government action on education, health, the economy, human resources, decision-making and legal issues and in efforts to counter violence against women.

48. Bilateral and multilateral partners contributed to programmes and projects to promote women's microenterprises and other employment, strengthen their management and economic capacities and provide credit facilities. In the context of efforts to achieve the MDGs, Cameroon's poverty reduction strategy paper had been approved in 2003. The action taken included measures for offering social services to stimulate the private sector, strengthen human resources and integrate underprivileged groups into the economy. Many activities were carried out in cooperation with United Nations organizations.

49. Specific activities by the Government and its national machinery for the advancement of women included awareness-raising with regard to women's rights and the relevant instruments and also advocacy for abandoning customs and practices harmful to women. Cameroon played an active role in the campaign against violence against women. In addition to awareness-raising and educational talks, help centres, a telephone helpline for victims of violence and a shelter had been established in the capital. Some police stations had special units to take care of women and children victims. Legislation had been adopted to penalize violence against women.

50. The advancement of women required the participation of the entire community and all government agencies. The budgetary process was now included in that framework, and statistical data were provided for follow-up and evaluation of the collaboration between the Ministries of Finance and Planning and other partners. There were a number of constraints that hampered Cameroon's efforts for the advancement of women, and she called on the development partners to honour the commitments that they had made at United Nations meetings and conferences on development. Cameroon supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/217) that attention to gender perspectives should be considered at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

51. **Ms. Von Liliem** (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that women were the hardest hit by the current food crisis and that particularly vulnerable groups, such as young children and pregnant women, were at increased risk of malnutrition. One of the underlying causes of food insecurity was that productivity had not kept pace with the growing demand for food caused by population growth, rising incomes and urbanization. Production of maize, wheat and rice had declined steeply while demand for cereals for food, feed and fuel had increased substantially.

52. The role of women, who were the main food producers in much of the world, in particular in poor countries where agriculture was highly labour-intensive, was underappreciated. Women

contributed half the labour for food eaten in developing countries, and three quarters in Africa. Gender inequalities in the food chain contributed to food insecurity; women had less access to resources and opportunities than men, limiting their ability to move from subsistence agriculture to higher value activity. The Comprehensive Framework for Action developed by the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis must therefore include measures to address gender-related issues.

53. IFAD, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners had launched, in honour of the International Day of Rural Women, a Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, explaining gender issues in agriculture and including best practices and lessons learned, to serve as a guide to mainstreaming gender issues in development projects, developing women farmers' capacity and strengthening women's participation in public and private institutions. The Sourcebook was an important complement to the Comprehensive Framework for Action.

54. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were increasingly important for IFAD, both as institutional objectives and as instruments for poverty reduction, because it recognized that the role of women as farmers and producers must be enhanced in order to maximize the impact of agricultural development on food security. The Fund's support for women leaders in agriculture had therefore been enhanced; for the first time a separate meeting of women leaders had been held in parallel with the meeting of the IFAD Governing Council.

55. A programme to support women in leadership positions in farmers' organizations was being prepared, and special attention was given to ensuring equal representation of women and men in farmers' organizations. IFAD had also supported women's role in decision-making; in cooperation with Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) and Heifer International, the Fund had launched the Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders, which had met for the first time in May 2008 during the high-level segment of the Commission for Social Development in New York.

56. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its general discussion of agenda item 56 (a) and (b).

The meeting rose at 12 noon.